



Forestry Division

# 2002 Annual Report Brule River State Forest



## Year in Review

2002 was a historic year for the forest. Probably the most noteworthy event again this year was the response to the 2000 hailstorm. Significant time was spent administering the timber sales to assure contract compliance. Tree planting operations also took a great deal of time and former Superintendent Jim Rau was hired to supervise that activity.

The draft masterplan was mailed out in early August. Following public hearings in Brule and Madison and an additional planning workshop in Maple, the Natural Resources Board unanimously approved the masterplan at their December board meeting in Madison. Actions proposed in this report are consistent with the new masterplan and are the first steps taken to begin implementation.

A donation was received to pay for the production of a video to teach river recreation ethics to users of the river. This video will be provided at no charge to groups that use the river. 4 themes were emphasized in the video – Glass is prohibited, keep litter tied into your boat, keep your voices down, and respect private property.

This was the first year of having a landing host to help educate the people using the river. Kevin Greaser was hired to greet people and explain what was expected of them as they use the river. Additionally, Kevin worked with staff from Brule River Canoe Rental to help them reinforce these messages with their customers. Signs were placed in their shuttle vehicles and a bulleting board was put up in the business explaining the rules of the river. The video was played in the registration area of the business. The landing host program combined with the video began to change some of the attitudes of the people recreating on the river. Half of the funding for the landing host was donated. We are very grateful to Brule Preservation Incorporated for their generosity in 2002.

An additional Ranger was hired in 2002. Ed Culhane worked nearly full time from the early season opener to the start of rifle deer season. He spent almost all his time on the

river enforcing fishing, boating, and behavior regulations. His lifelong familiarity with the river was invaluable. He worked closely with Kevin Greaser and kept many problems from developing. Considerable time was spent undercover monitoring anglers in the early season because of complaints of anglers taking undersized fish. No cases were made. The high level of ethics displayed by anglers impressed Ed.

Once again in the spring of 2002 the river rose to extremely high levels. Work that was done to the canoe landings at Pine Tree and Highway 13 held and there was little damage to state property due to the flooding.

The 2001-02 ski season was a banner season for the property. As one of the few places in the region with sufficient snow it attracted a lot of attention. Additional trails were constructed in 2002 and old trails were graded smooth. The 2002-03 season had even less snow than the prior year and skier numbers were more similar to an average year.

The camping season was pretty typical of past years. Hot weather has a mixed effect on attendance. Some come to escape the city heat but at a certain point it's just too hot to camp very comfortably.

Other important work was done on the property and is described in the articles in this report. Overall 2002 was a very good year for the property. We hope to further build on those successes in 2003.

We hope you like this new format for the annual report. It includes reports from other programs that help us manage the property including Fisheries and Wildlife. And we have included information on some of the research that is going on within the forest. The forest is committed to integrated management and public involvement. Please share with us your thoughts and concerns about the contents of this document.



From left to right: Kevin Feind, Kurt Janko, Steve Petersen, Dave Schulz, Cathy Alcott, Chris Sutherland

# Wildlife Management

## Wildlife Manager Greg Kessler

### Surveys

Sharp-tailed grouse surveys showed continued use of the dancing ground near Clevedon Road, but with only 1 dancing male observed in 2002. Sharptails have also been observed near the Motts ravine pine barrens area, but their dancing grounds have not been found. Frog and bird surveys were completed in cooperation with Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program. A planned predator track survey was not completed due to lack of suitable snow conditions early this winter.

Over the next year surveys for predators, sharp-tailed grouse, frogs and marsh birds, deer, and wolf surveys will continue. Collaring of additional wolves is dependent on further funding of this program. There are no plans for additional deer health testing at this time.

### Wolves

There are currently 4 known packs that use portions of the BRSF, these are Orienta (2 wolves), Casey Creek (5 wolves), Moreland Lake (4 wolves), and Shoberg Lake (5 wolves). Wolf activity in early winter was observed near the Ranger Station but it is uncertain if these are associated with any of the known established packs. Wolf surveys included trapping and collaring of young adult females in both the Shoberg Lake and Casey Creek packs during early summer 2002. Unfortunately, both wolves have dispersed to new areas. The Shoberg Lake wolf is a black wolf that is now somewhere in Minnesota and the Casey Creek female is just north of Eau Claire Lakes area.

### Deer

Deer surveys included typical collection of winter severity data, summer doe-fawn observations, deer registration, and aging. Due to the discovery of CWD in southern Wisconsin, many volunteers were also needed to collect deer heads for testing in Douglas and Bayfield counties. As of March 10, 97 deer in Douglas and 129 deer in Bayfield have tested



negative for CWD. Statewide, 17,525 deer outside the CWD management area have been tested, with no positives found. Population estimates indicate that deer management units 2 and 9 (cover the entire BRSF) will not be designated as a T-zone in 2003. Apparently, 3-years of T-zone has slowly reduced the population to the point where a traditional deer season with liberal hunter's choice and bonus permits should hold the herd near goals.



### Land Management

Two prescribed burns were completed, Barrier Pond Fields (55 acres) and Brule River Road Fields (10.5 acres). Mowing was completed on Fastland Fields (7 acres). Mowing at Leppala and Koski were not completed as planned. Perimeters of areas to be burned in 2003 (Goose Refuge and Cloverland) were mowed to facilitate easier fireline preparation.

Dike maintenance was performed at Koski, Barrier, and Cloverland Community Club ponds. Maintenance consisted of filling in muskrat burrows and mowing. Dike maintenance will continue and muskrat burrows and mowing will continue as time and funding permits.

Two prescribed burns are planned for 2003. Cloverland Community Club Fields (38 acres) and the northern portion of the Goose Refuge (34 acres). Mowing will be done at Leppala (18.3 acres) and Koski North (10.4 acres). Hand cutting or mowing may begin on the former FmHA property on the west side of Clevedon Road that lies within the waterfowl refuge.

As a result of the new master plan, 60 openings totally 236.5 acres will no longer be maintained. An evaluation of these openings will be done to identify those that will likely succeed naturally to white pine or spruce or those that will require seeding and/or planting to establish conifer cover. The remaining 50 openings totaling 79.7 acres will be evaluated for potential to incorporate into the hunter walking trail system and mowed concurrent with the trail system. Openings to be maintained by hand cutting will resume in 2004, with a goal to maintain these openings every third year.

# Law Enforcement Update

## Ranger Kevin Feind

The 2002 law enforcement effort on the Brule River State Forest was the most unique in the property's history. Landing host Kevin Greaser worked at canoe landings to greet users and to deliver a proactive law enforcement message. Kevin did a great job educating people and the public response was very favorable. Ranger Ed Culhane was hired to spend time on the river addressing illegal fishing, and watercraft issues related to litter and disorderly conduct. Ranger Jerry Danielson spent the majority of his time patrolling other high use areas of the Forest. Jerry excels in campground contacts and many visitors have known him for years. Ranger Feind patrolled property wide. This combined effort greatly increased the number of visitor contacts made. Many more people came to realize that there are Rangers patrolling the property and that they have to behave.

In 2002 there wasn't enough snow for good snowmobiling until March. However, we had more snow than just about anywhere else, so the trails stayed very busy. We also drew a huge following of skiers to the Afterhours Ski Trail. Kevin checked people on the trail for passes and found once again there was near 100% compliance. The ski trail had its final grooming on April 7<sup>th</sup> and on April 12<sup>th</sup> the gates were closed on the Brule-St. Croix Snowmobile Trail. People continued to ski until the second week in May.

The early season angler numbers were up slightly due to good conditions. Ranger Culhane was used undercover to get a better feel for what happens on the river. Many times he fished into groups of anglers and observed them. Ranger Culhane saw about 30 legal steelhead landed while undercover, and only three were kept. Much of his time was spent upstream of CTH FF where we've for years had complaints of snagging. No violations were observed.



Summer is intense and sometimes filled with odd behaviors. Highlights (or lowlights) include:

- A group of young men took a disorderly canoe trip down the river creating a wave of complaint calls to the office. They were apprehended, cited, and escorted from the river.
- Use of the patrol boat yielded several cases of illegal camping and ATV use on the Lake Superior shoreline.

- Ranger Feind cited an individual frying an undersized 10" rainbow trout, and seized the frying fish as evidence.
- Several emotionally disturbed people were encountered over the summer and one attempted suicide on their campsite.
- A woman traveling cross-country with her two unfriendly pit bulls fell gravely ill and came to the Ranger Station for help. She had emergency surgery and the dogs spent time at the Douglas County Humane Society after they were tranquilized in order to be removed from the vehicle.

The work Kevin Greaser did greatly improved compliance on the river. Personal floatation device violations and unsecured beverage container violations went way down. We also emphasized the need for watercraft users to respect the private landowners along the river by not trespassing and to keep their voices down. We worked with the Brule River Canoe Rental who supported an informational bulletin board within their business to educate their customers about the rules that exist on the Brule.



The Brule River State Forest acquired a surveillance video camera this year, and Ranger Feind used it at a locked gate that people historically drove around. Ranger Feind made a case and the suspect pled no contest to the citation after told he was on video.

In the fall Ranger Feind hunted for illegal bait piles and permanent stands on the Forest. Grouse numbers were very low this year and very few bird hunters were out. Ranger Feind responded to a report of an unethical balsam bough harvester and found a group of people harvesting without a permit. They had cut about 300 trees. Numerous charges were filed.

For the coming year the law enforcement emphasis will be similar to the year past. Forestry Technician Pete Witt will be patrolling the forest this summer and will especially be working extensive areas of the forest that traditionally get less attention. Many groups will have had the river ethics video mailed to them and it is hoped that the next several years can dramatically change the behavior of people recreating on the river.

# Forest Management

## Forester Dave Schulz

### Spring 2002

Cutting was completed on the final hail damaged timber sales that occurred in the Stone Chimney road area. Totals for this salvage logging included 1500 acres, 29,000 cords, and \$917,000 in stumpage fees collected. This made for an extremely busy time for sale administration. During most of this time daily visits to active timber sales were made to ensure contract compliance. Office administration (paperwork) continued well into summer before all sales were closed out.

Site preparation and planting activities were conducted on 300 acres within the hail-damaged area. This included using a machine to create scalps to plant trees into and having a contract hand planting crew planting approximately 300,000 seedlings (168M red pine, 60M white pine, 36M jack pine, 24M white spruce, 6M white cedar, 6M tamarack) within this area. The crew we had was from Guatemala and was excellent. They had some trouble with their motel (Twin Gables) burning down on the first night in town, but the community truly helped them out as many of their belongings were lost in the fire.



A successful volunteer tree planting day was held to plant trees within the Wilson Creek corridor along Hwy P. About 30 people showed up from groups such as the Brule River Sportsmans Club, Trout Unlimited, and Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association. About 8,000 trees were planted in tough conditions on a snowy April day.

### Summer 2002

Summer brought infestations of Forest Tent Caterpillar to the Brule Forest for the second straight year. Defoliation was extremely heavy in most of the forest. The "friendly" flies followed and were quite pesty during mid summer. Two lined chestnut borers caused heavy mortality to oak stands within the Brule area. These are opportunistic insects which attack oak trees that are under stress from other sources, in this case the tent caterpillars. Aerial surveys were flown in late summer to assess the damages. Fortunately, damage to oak on the Brule Forest was minor

and only one small area adjacent to a planned sale was severely damaged.

A research study was established within the hail-damaged area to track long-term effects of the storm to the ecology of the area. Many tree measurements were taken along with bird surveys. Follow-up measurements will be taken again this summer and will be used to determine forest recovery from the damaging effects of the hail. Colleen Matula, a forest ecologist for the DNR's Northern Region, coordinates this effort.

### Fall 2002

Timber sale field work was completed on 289 acres. This included selectively marking about 170 acres of red pine for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> thinnings, as well as areas of row thinning in red pine and spruce plantations. Also included was about 45 acres of regeneration harvest in mixed timber types.

Survival counts were completed in some of the areas planted in the spring. Results in some areas were discouraging, with less than hoped for survival rates. More surveys will be done in the future to determine if replanting will be necessary.

### Winter 2003

The winter of 2003 was extremely cold, which focused activities to completing a much needed forest reconnaissance updating project. This is done with a computer based mapping program that our forest cover data is stored on. The end result of the cold winter is a much improved and updated database.

Stands needing management were prioritized and selected to be included in next years timber sale bid packets. Five stands of red pine totaling 359 acres and one stand of jack pine totaling 120 acres were selected to be included in the next bid opening, planned for the fall of 2003.



## Facilities Maintenance and Development

Superintendent Steve Petersen

Over the last 12 months some good progress has been made to complete several funded development projects and several additional projects have been funded recently.

Major repairs were accomplished at the mouth of the Brule boat landing, including gravel on the road to the landing and flattening the approach to the landing. Culverts adjacent to the parking lot were repaired and rip-rap was placed in the ditch next to the parking lot.



A pit toilet has been built at the highway 2 canoe landing. This replaces the two portable toilets that stood here for many years. The new toilets are handicap accessible and easy to clean.

The Forestry Technicians used their bulldozers to help construct several miles of new trail at the ski area and they also smoothed out some of the old trail. Prisoners from the Gordon Correctional Center did the handwork on the trail under the supervision of Kurt Janko and Kevin Feind. Adam Ronchi, a student at Northwestern High School, painted new trail map signs.

An aluminum pier was installed at the St. Croix boat landing. This 72' long pier makes boat launching and landing far easier and faster.

Projects to repair or replace the canoe landing at highway 2 and at Copper Range campground were not performed. Funding for these projects has been cut. We will continue to make repairs as needed to keep them functional. Similarly, the project to replace the nature trail signs on the Stony Hill Nature Trail has been cut.

Funding has been received to make repairs to the Bayfield Road Hiking Trail and to the trail to Mays Ledges. The temporary repairs made in 2000 to the Mays Ledges Trail showed that developing a firm tread will focus traffic and the trail will narrow considerably. This project will make those repairs more permanent.

A small bridge will be built across Sandy Hook to provide an improved snowmobile access to Brule. This route will take snowmobiles off the shoulder of highway 27. Other plans for the snowmobile trail this summer include grading work to smooth the trail and enhance safety.

The Ranger Station and the metal garage will be painted this summer. And the Ranger Station awnings will be

replaced with a dark green canvas to help the building blend in better from the river.

This summer we hope to install larger, rustic bulletin boards and improved signage at the angler lots. This project would also grade those lots, replace culverts, and clean up the sites. Work will continue to make the mouth of the Brule boat landing area more attractive.

The parking lot at Stones Bridge will be seal coated and re-stripped to encourage more efficient traffic flow there now that the bridge has been replaced and guardrail separates the parking lot from the road.

Other projects that are not funded by a development projects but are important tasks we'll work on over the season are to repair and repaint the restrooms on the forest, especially in the Bois Brule Campground. We will also be removing several campsites at both the Bois Brule and the Copper Range Campgrounds. Planning will start for the group camp described in the masterplan.

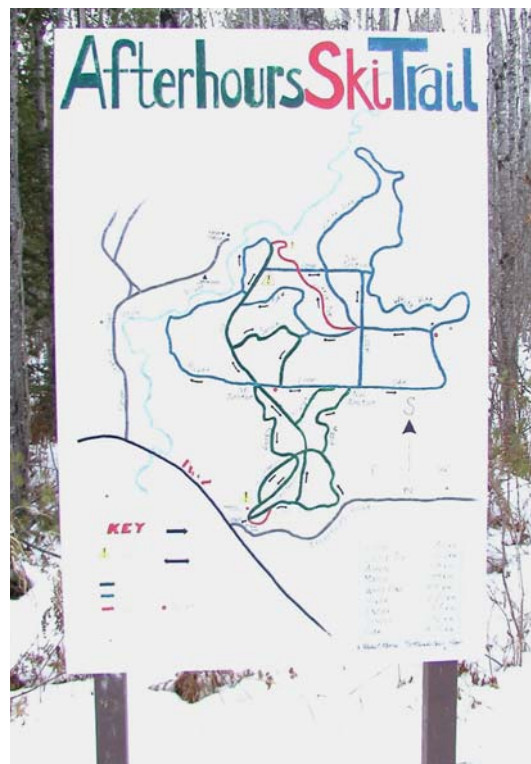
One of the campsites in Bois Brule that will be removed is site 8, one of the three riverside sites which get far heavier use than the rest of the sites. We are going to put them into a rotation where a site is rested for two years and then one of the other sites will be closed instead. Efforts will be made to do shoreline restoration work adjacent to all these sites and to attempt to conceal them from the river some more.

A shoreline restoration demonstration will be attempted in the Bois Brule Picnic Area. This will be done to establish shoreline vegetation between the road and the river to stabilize that bank and conceal the picnic area. We will attempt to blend the accessible fishing platform into this vegetation.

In 2003 a special emphasis will be made to check for private use of state lands with follow-up surveys scheduled as needed in 2004.

Most development that we plan attempts to conceal the development or use methods and materials that might

have been used if the CCC's had built it nearly 70 years ago.



# Hail Study Summary

## Regional Forest Ecologist Colleen Matula

### Background

In response to the Summer 2000 hail damage storm on the Brule River State Forest, a monitoring project was established in the affected area. This large disturbance event presents an opportunity to examine how this forest system responds and recovers from a sudden catastrophic change. The goal of this project is to select a few variables that have been affected by this event and document the changes that occur over time. The study is not intended to make predictions for future disturbance events, however, will help in understanding how the landscape responds to future disturbance events that might occur. This landscape change not only affected trees but also other species such as neotropical bird populations and nonnative plant species in the area. In mid May monitoring began on the Brule River State Forest hail damage and control areas. In May breeding bird counts were established in both control and the damaged area. In mid June through September, tree plots were established in both hail damaged and control areas. Tree health and growth measurements were taken in each plot. The following is a brief description of each study; a summary of results and discussion; and needs for further monitoring.



### Tree Health and Growth Measurements

A total of 33 plots were established in a variety of cover types: 21 in the damaged area and 12 in the control areas. The cover types selected are red pine, swamp conifer, aspen (mature and young). Eight trees from each plot were selected to monitor over the next few years. A total of 168 trees in the damaged area and 96 trees in the control were measured. The species include red pine, cedar, white birch, balsam fir, black spruce, quaking and big tooth aspen. A

variety of tree measurements were taken including DBH, total height, crown ratio, crown dieback and crown density. Tree core samples were taken from each plot and analyzed. Each plot was located using a GPS receiver. Regeneration plots in young, damaged aspen were also conducted.

All raw data was entered into Excel spreadsheet and Oracle database format. It was then briefly analyzed. Statistical evaluation will occur when more than one year of data is obtained.

### Summary

- Dieback of >40% occurred in only 28 of the 168 trees in the damaged area.
- Extreme dieback was documented in trees that had signs of long-term stress.
- Extreme dieback was documented in the swamp conifer plots, showing signs of slow growth over the last 20 years documented in tree ring analysis.
- Dieback was most significant in swamp conifer forest type followed by aspen and red pine.
- There was no correlation between the density of the stand (BA) and the amount of damage.
- Overall, slower growth rates were documented in the last 2 years (in the tree ring analysis) for all species in both control and damaged samples noting that it may be a variety of factors i.e. climate, forest tent caterpillar.
- In the tree ring analysis, it was apparent that the drought of '87 and '88 affected all species showing decreased growth rates.
- One core sample taken from a control plot was from a 139 year old white cedar.

### Discussion/Needs

The initial establishment of permanent plots took a bit of time. On an average day field personnel established 3 plots per day depending on the location and other factors. Crown assessments were, in part, difficult to conduct. In general, crown assessments can be very subjective, thus precision through further training is needed (FIA training is scheduled for May). However, looking at the overall data on crown assessments, between the control and damaged trees documented, seemed consistent when compared to the other data from the site. Improvements in marking the plots are needed (i.e. better permanent markers). Timing for follow up is crucial for next year...visiting plots soon after full leaf out is critical. Field personnel made a point to monitor recovery from forest tent caterpillar damage before tree assessments were obtained.

### Breeding Bird Count

In mid May- June breeding bird counts were conducted. There were 4 transects established: 1 control and 3 in the damaged area. Each transect had approximately 25 plots that were at least ¼ mile apart for a total of 100 plots. There were a variety of habitats in each transect including red and white pine, northern hardwood, aspen, swamp conifer, open field, shrub wetland, bog and cattail marsh.

## Summary

### Damaged Area (hail damage)

- Overall this area had less northern hardwood plots than the control transect.
- More plots with swamp conifer, aspen (mature and young), shrub wetland.
- More species were documented (73 total) and more # of individuals than the control transect.
- Some brown headed cowbirds documented.
- Interesting finds were Lincoln sparrow, Cerulean warbler, Northern Goshawk.
- Most species were edge, shrub and open field specialist, however, there were some interior forest species such as Cerulean warbler and the Black throated, green warbler.
- Species with the most # of individuals in the transect is Ovenbird followed by American crow, Chesnut-sided warbler and Red-eyed vireo.
- Black-billed cuckoo documented but not Yellow-billed cuckoo.

### Control

- More northern hardwood, red pine and open field plots than the damage transects.
- Less number of species found (39 total) and less # of individuals than the damaged transects.
- Species with the most number of individuals counted in transect is Red-eyed vireo followed by ovenbird and Least flycatcher.
- Yellow-billed cuckoo documented but not Black-billed cuckoo.

### Discussion/Needs

Of interest were both Yellow and Black-billed cuckoo populations indicative of forest tent caterpillar eruptions on the forest. The caterpillar hatch was later this year (early June) and not as numerous, however, they were still present. Though the Yellow-billed cuckoo is more reliant on forest- forest edge (McPeck, personal communication) both cuckoo species were well representative (Yellow-billed in the control transect and Black-billed in the damaged transect). Increasing the number and diversity of plots in each transect or to add a new transect focusing on shrub-wetland and swamp conifer is a suggestion. Northern hardwood, red pine and aspen forest types are well represented in the transects. In addition, focusing on insect outbreaks is important to this study and perhaps which species are following insect outbreaks. For more information on species, see appendix.

Some species benefit from habitat changes and those noted in the damaged area compared to the control are the edge, shrub and open field specialists. These species include: chesnut-sided warbler, mourning warbler, magnolia warbler, golden-winged warbler, and nashville warbler to mention a few. Of particular interest are the species that are missing thus the increase plots for next year (could there be cape may warbler, more black and white warblers and bay-breasted?)

## Overall Comments

There are only a few suggestions for monitoring in 2003. The suggestions include monitoring the areas where prescribed burns and scarification occurred after the salvage harvest in 2002; monitor general area for presence of non-native, invasive plant species and insect outbreaks; and continue consistency in monitoring existing plots and transects.



### Recognition

Special thanks to the following folks: Beth Bartol, Steve LaValley, and Andy Paulios who conducted the breeding bird surveys. Also thanks to Chuck Zosel, Dave Shultz and Kurt Janko who weathered the heat and hornets this year as well as provided logistic support. In addition, thanks to Steve Petersen, Tim Mulhern and Mike Luedeke in full support of this project.

## New Equipment

### Superintendent Steve Petersen

The forest was fortunate to be able to purchase some additional equipment during 2002. These items make forest staff more productive and present a professional image to the public.

A 1985 Tucker Sno Cat tracked vehicle was purchased to groom ski trails with. In its previous life it had been used to groom snowmobile trails in Iowa. It is used to pull a Yellowstone Track Systems "Ginzu Groomer". This trail groomer is the state-of-the-art for pulled groomers. Two smaller Ginzu groomers to pull behind snowmobiles were acquired as well. In the fall one of the grooming snowmobiles was replaced with a newer model.

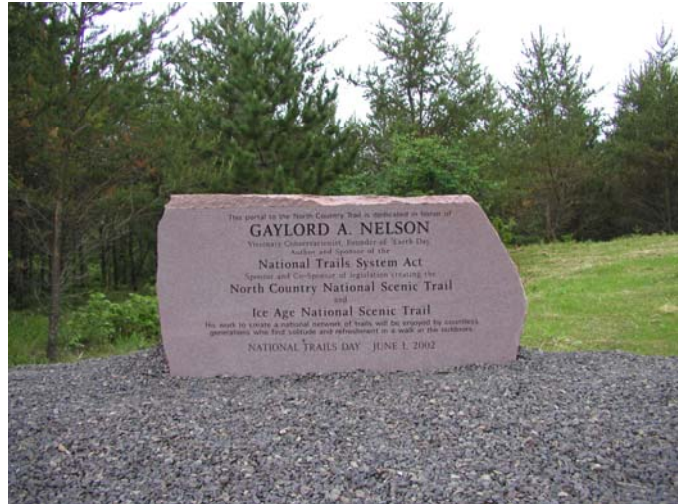
A gently used Mad River Outrage X solo whitewater canoe was bought and was painted and outfitted for more "Rangerly" purposes. It is fully equipped with a whitewater saddle and flotation bags and is identified on the side with a RANGER logo. An older Mad River Explorer canoe was similarly painted and identified and is used as a larger solo canoe. This equipment provides better access to the lower river for patrol.

A pressure washer, larger tractor bucket, tractor forklift tines, and air compressor were purchased to improve maintenance efficiency and safety.

You may see an enclosed trailer on the property identified by DNR logos and "Brule River State Forest Facilities Maintenance". This trailer serves as a mobile shop for Kurt Janko, the Facility Repair Worker for the forest. It holds his maintenance supplies, tools, and materials to address maintenance needs he may encounter on patrol. This will save significant time making multiple trips to address problems. It also carries a new commercial grade John Deere walk-behind mower that will save much mowing time.

An old dump truck has been replaced with a new Ford F450 Super Duty dump truck equipped with a 10' Boss snowplow. The cost to operate this vehicle is far less than the old truck and the snowplow works exceptionally well.

Many of these purchases were due to good fate and timing and the generosity of other properties. Future budgets will not provide for this ability. We are grateful for the equipment we have and make every effort to take care of it.



## North Country Trail

### Superintendent Steve Petersen

On National Trails Day 2002 the North Country Trail Association, the National Park Service, and the forest celebrated the contributions of former governor and senator Gaylord Nelson by dedicating a monument in his honor on the North Country Trail. The monument is located adjacent to a newly constructed parking lot off of highway 27 about 6 miles south of Brule. It is considered the national portal to the North Country Trail. A number of speakers from the DNR, National Park Service, North Country Trail Association, and friends and family of Mr. Nelson reflected on the tremendous effect he has had on trails and the environment both in Wisconsin and nationally. We are extremely honored to have been chosen as the location for this monument.

The National Park Service has certified several additional miles of North Country Trail. This new segment extends south from Troy Pit Road. Work has begun to extend the trail from that point to the Bayfield County line, where it leaves the property. When this is completed, probably during 2003, the trail will be certified continuous across the state forest.





## **WCC Ranger Cadet**

### **Superintendent Steve Petersen**

Since September the forest has hosted Chris Sutherland as a WCC Ranger Cadet. This program is a cooperative program between the DNR and the Wisconsin Conservation Corps to provide an opportunity for a corps member to be exposed to the work that we perform in the DNR. The hope is that the cadet will choose a career in a natural resources field, go to college, and eventually return to work full time for the DNR.

Since Chris began here he has cruised timber, shocked fish, done CWD sampling, studied to be a wildland firefighter, routed many signs, patrolled with the Ranger, and has helped with customer service at the Ranger Station. We are very pleased to have Chris working with us. He will be with us through the summer and plans to attend college at the University of Wisconsin Steven Point in the fall to study forestry.



## **Brule Fish Hatchery**

### **Gervase Thompson**

The Brule River Trout Rearing Station was built in 1927. The water supply for the rearing station is the entire flow of the Little Brule River. We receive 2400 gpm of water flow throughout the facility. We raise four domestic and three feral species of trout at Brule. St. Croix brook and brown trout, Erwin rainbow trout, Nipigon brook trout, Seeforellen brown trout and Brule River steelhead. All domestic fish are transferred in as small fingerlings in early June from the St. Croix Falls and Osceola State Fish Hatcheries. In March, the Brule River steelhead arrive as yearlings and later in the summer, the Seeforellen brown trout and Nipigon brook trout arrive as fingerlings from the Bayfield State Fish Hatchery. We stock lakes, rivers and streams in 11 counties in northern Wisconsin and also parts of Lake Superior and Lake Michigan. Last year we stocked 43,000 Brook trout; 300,000 Brown trout; 27,000 Rainbow trout; and 117,000 Steelhead. In 2003, we will stock 50,000 Brook trout; 340,000 Brown trout; and 40,000 Rainbow trout.

Over the last several years the nature center in the old hatchery office was a big hit with tourists. We had over 1200 visitors from 25 states and nine countries sign our guest book from July 2001 to June 2002. Many tourists visit our facility after hours during the summer. These visitors are not signed in the guest book and therefore are not counted.

## **Fishery Management**

### **Fish Manager Dennis Pratt**

In 2002 fisheries staff was able to work on a cooperative trout habitat project with the Brule River Sportsman's Club. On Saturday, September 7<sup>th</sup> between forty and fifty volunteers placed thirty yards of spawning gravel in the Cedar Island stretch of the river. Cedar Island Conservancy Incorporated were gracious hosts for the activity and donated staff time and equipment over a two day period to both set up the project and haul the gravel from a gravel storage location to the Cedar Island Bridge. Gravel was then placed into gravel boats for club members to float upstream to the spawning site. A special thanks goes to Cedar Island caretaker Mr. Swanson who efficiently operated the heavy equipment to get the gravel to the river. Good numbers of fall spawners were observed utilizing the new gravel.

Fisheries staff also monitored both the spring and fall trout and salmon runs at the Sea Lamprey Barrier (the run enumeration is not completed at this time) and partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service personnel to capture and remove lampreys at the barrier. Trout and salmon spawning activity at habitat improvement sites were monitored and maintenance work was done at a number of past habitat improvement sites.

Fisheries staff along with Brule River State Forest staff worked closely with Department of Transportation staff in the planning and construction phases of the Stones Bridge replacement project.

## Master Plan Approved

The Natural Resources Board approved the Brule River State Forest Master Plan on December 4, 2002. A number of people spoke at the Board meeting concerning the plan; speakers both favored and opposed the plan. Some said they wanted to see issues tracked and actions summarized as DNR moves forward in implementing. In response in approving the plan, the Board asked staff to prepare a summary of key plan provisions and the ways in which the plan ensures protection of the river. The summary document will be included in the final printed document.

The master plan will guide operations of the 41,000-acre state forest over the next 15 years. The NRB approval of the master plan caps more than five years of extensive public involvement that will shape the ecological, economic, social and cultural facets of the forest. In all, 13 public meetings were held at key steps in the process. Additional input was sought from integral stakeholders, including neighboring landowners, anglers, hunters, canoeists, environmental and conservation groups, forest product and tourism-related businesses, local governments and tribal interests.

The BRSF plan offers diverse management practices to protect water quality, restore boreal forest and pine barrens, and improve recreational experiences through increased education and enforcement. The plan also establishes a passive management zone along the Brule River that is triple the distance of the old plan, and is contained within scenic and native community management areas.

The three "themes" outlined in the BRSF plan include 1) protection of the Brule River system and sport fishery, 2) land management to achieve ecological goals and 3) sustainable recreation. In addition, a proposed boundary expansion focuses on private industrial forests in the area to assure protection from development, restoration of ecosystems, and the availability of forest products.

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## Vision Statement

From the masterplan

***The Brule River State Forest provides for the sustainability of a unique river system and biologically rich forest community. The Forest's natural resources are managed, protected and restored to promote ecological health and natural communities, to complement the larger ecosystem, and to recognize cultural and economic values. The state forest accommodates recreational activities consistent with the natural quality and scenic settings found along the Bois Brule River. The Department of Natural Resources works with federal, state, tribal and local governments, neighboring industrial and private forest owners, and citizens who enjoy and subsist on the resources of the Brule River State Forest.***

